

20 November 2015

# Army Public Health Weekly Update

Army Public Health Center

The Army Public Health Update is a collection of articles taken verbatim from public sources to offer awareness of current health issues and the media coverage given to them. The articles do not necessarily represent US Army Medical Department opinions, views, policy, or guidance, and should not be construed or interpreted as being endorsed by the US Army Medical Command.

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## NOTICE:

The Army Public Health Weekly Update won't be published next week. Publication will resume on 4 December.

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## U.S. MILITARY

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### Army researchers develop face wrap to defeat tear gas

16 November - Army special operators wanted a way to protect themselves from tear gas — something lightweight, something that goes on fast, something that works even if the operator is sporting a beard. Army researchers rose to the challenge with the Integrated Respiratory and Eye Protective Scarf. ... A filter that keeps out [tear gas] is connected to stretchable fabric that wraps around the soldier's head and secures in the back via Velcro. Researchers described it as "one size fits most" and said it would be compatible with any facial hair, as well as any headgear. [Army Times](#)

### Does childhood abuse impact the health care use of women veterans?

17 November - Childhood physical abuse remains an important contributor to physical and mental health even after adjusting for the more proximate experience of military sexual trauma. ... [Researchers] investigated whether physical or sexual abuse in childhood could serve as a predictor later for health symptoms and health care use for women veterans. ... After adjusting for age, race, military branch, childhood sexual abuse, and military sexual trauma, the researchers found that physical abuse in childhood serves as a significant predictor of decreased physical health and higher rates of depressive or posttraumatic stress disorder conditions. However, this study did not find strong associations between sexual abuse in childhood and poor mental and physical health later. [Federal Practitioner](#)

### Paralympics to get tough on scrotum-squeezing 'boosters'

17 November - Wheelchair-bound athletes could face tougher checks at next year's Rio Paralympics to stop them risking their health by sitting on their scrotums, or clamping off catheters to fill their bladders, in order to boost adrenaline and performance. Officials said on Tuesday the International Paralympic Committee is reviewing guidelines against "boosting", a practice employed by some athletes with spinal cord injuries. Banned for more than a decade, it does not use any artificial stimulants. Instead, it involves tricking the brain into triggering "autonomic dysreflexia" (AD), causing the body to flush with adrenaline to achieve more power and greater oxygen uptake during races. Squeezing the scrotum or filling and then tapping the bladder are the most common external stimuli to induce AD, resulting in elevated heart rates and blood pressure. [Reuters](#)

### Pentagon study links prescription stimulants to military PTSD risk

19 November - Stimulant medications used to treat attention deficit problems and keep service members alert during long stretches of combat might increase vulnerability to post-traumatic stress disorder, a new study suggests. Defense Department researchers analyzing

### OPSS: High Risk Supplements Application

The Operation Supplement Safety (OPSS) High-Risk Supplement List is now available as a free app to help you identify supplements that might pose a potential risk to your health or career. The app is currently available for iPhone/iPad from the Apple App Store and coming soon for Android. Download it directly to your phone or tablet.



data from nearly 26,000 service members found that those with prescriptions for the stimulants were five times more likely to have PTSD. Drugs such as Adderall and Ritalin raise concentrations of the brain chemical norepinephrine, which has been shown to result in more vivid and persistent memories of emotionally charged situations. Traumatic memories are a hallmark of PTSD. [Los Angeles Times](#)

## The US military is developing brain implants to boost memory and heal PTSD

17 November - ... DARPA has multiple brain-improvement projects in the works, but its Restoring Active Memory project (or RAM, an apparent play on the acronym for a type of computer memory) has a goal of restoring the memory functions of US soldiers returning from the battlefield with traumatic brain injuries. According to the Atlantic's Annie Jacobsen, 300,000 soldiers came home from Iraq and Afghanistan with brain injuries.

DARPA's program aims to develop an implantable, wireless device that could aid those soldiers' cognitive abilities both during and after wars. [Defense One](#)

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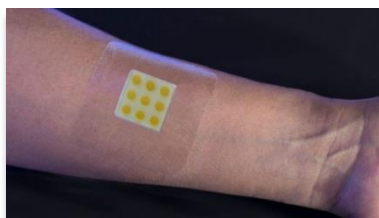
### GLOBAL

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## Antibiotic resistance: World on cusp of 'post-antibiotic era'

19 November - The world is on the cusp of a "post-antibiotic era", scientists have warned after finding bacteria resistant to drugs used when all other treatments have failed. They identified bacteria able to shrug off the drug of last resort - colistin - in patients and livestock in China. They said that resistance would spread around the world and raised the spectre of untreatable infections. It is likely resistance emerged after colistin was overused in farm animals. [BBC News](#)

## Colour-changing dressing 'fights antibiotic resistance'



16 November - A medical dressing that changes colour when it detects infection could cut the unnecessary use of antibiotics, say scientists at Bath University. It works by releasing fluorescent dye from tiny capsules when toxins are given out by bacteria in a wound. This allows doctors to identify bacterial infections and treat them

more quickly, particularly in children with burns. [BBC News](#)

### Classified Version of the Weekly Update

An Army Public Health Weekly Update is available with articles classified up to the **SECRET** level from the USAPHC SIPRNet site:

<http://phc.army.smil.mil>

Look under Hot Topics & Current Issues.

To access this version, you will need a **SECRET** clearance and a SIPRNet account.

## Global drug spending to hit \$1.4 trillion in 2020: IMS

18 November - Global spending on medicines will reach \$1.4 trillion in 2020, driven by increased healthcare access in emerging markets and high-priced new drugs for cancer and other diseases, according to a forecast by IMS Health released on Wednesday. That is up from about \$1.07 trillion this year, representing a compound annual growth rate of 4 to 7 percent over the next five years. ... Some 225 new drugs will come to market over the next five years, about a third aimed at cancer, as well as medicines for rare diseases, which can carry ultra-high price tags, and treatments for autoimmune diseases and heart disease, the report said. The cost will be partially offset by patent expirations expected to reduce spending on branded medicines by \$178 billion. [Reuters](#)

## Global fight against tuberculosis hinges on India stepping up funding: WHO

19 November - India is critical to the global fight to end an epidemic of tuberculosis by 2030 and must step up funding to control the disease, the World Health Organization said, citing concerns over broader cutbacks in government health programs. India is the world's TB hotspot as it accounts for 23 percent of global cases and the most deaths - 220,000 last year. ... Campaigners blame the deaths on weak infection controls, poor oversight and low health spending. Still, India's TB program reduced the prevalence of the disease by more than half to 211 cases per 100,000 people from 1990 to 2013. [Reuters](#)

## Measles vaccine has saved 17.1 million lives since 2000, CDC says

13 November - Global measles deaths have dropped 79% in the past 15 years, and the measles vaccine saved an estimated 17.1 million people in that span, but vaccine uptake has stagnated in recent years, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported. ... About 114,900 people worldwide died of measles in 2014, down dramatically from 546,800 in 2000, the CDC said. ... Declines in 2014 would have been even more dramatic if not for large outbreaks in China (52,628 cases), the Philippines (58,848), and Vietnam (15,033). [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## Researchers find link between air pollution and heart disease

18 November - Higher levels of coarse particles in the air associated with increase in same-day cardiovascular hospitalizations in major urban areas. Researchers ... have found a link between higher levels of a specific kind of air pollution in major urban areas and an increase in cardiovascular-related hospitalizations such as for heart attacks in people 65 and older. The findings ... are the strongest evidence to date that coarse particulate matter – airborne pollutants that range in size from 2.5 to 10 microns in diameter and can be released into the air from farming, construction projects or even wind in the desert – impacts public health. It

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has long been understood that particles smaller in size, which typically come from automobile exhaust or power plants, can damage the lungs and even enter the bloodstream. This is believed to be the first study that clearly implicates larger particles, which are smaller in diameter than a human hair. [Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health News](#)

## Study notes MERS, SARS virus shedding similarities

13 November - Scientists yesterday revealed that both the timing and intensity of MERS virus shedding is similar to SARS, a related coronavirus, based on a study of patients in a hospital outbreak. ... The team determined that the average and peak lower airway excretion of MERS-CoV were similar to what's known for SARS. Timing of symptom onset to lab diagnostics (8 days) was similar to early Hong Kong SARS cases. Shedding peak was also similar for the two viruses, and the authors noted that neither the virus concentration nor respiratory shedding timing can explain differences in transmissibility between MERS and SARS. [CIDRAP](#)

## Twitter streams fuel big data approaches to health forecasting

17 November - ... [Scientists] are finding that Twitter data—especially when combined with other real-time data streams like environmental sensors or data from fitness apps—also have the potential to provide early warnings about chronic disease, emergencies, adverse drug reactions, or even safety problems like prescription drug misuse. ... [Researchers] used semiautomated techniques to sift through more than 1 million asthma-related tweets posted in the Dallas–Fort Worth area in the fall of 2013 and weeded out Twitter posts made in jest or that were clearly not relevant. ... After excluding this noise, they found that the number of asthma-related tweets was associated with ED visits for asthma in the area during that fall. Asthma tweets were not correlated with ED visits for abdominal pain or constipation, which were used as a control.

[Journal of the American Medical Association](#)

## Widespread misunderstanding about antibiotic resistance threatens public health – UN health agency

16 November 2015 – A recent multi-country survey revealed that people are confused about the rising threat of antibiotic resistance to public health and are unclear about how to prevent it from growing, World Health Organization (WHO) said today ... [The] multi-country survey included 14 questions on the use of antibiotics, knowledge of antibiotics and of antibiotic resistance. ... The study found that nearly 60 per cent of 10,000 people who were surveyed across 12 countries acknowledge that antibiotic resistance is an issue that can affect their families, but they are unsure of how it affects them. Among the surveyed, nearly 64 per cent respondents believe antibiotics can be used to treat colds and flu, despite the fact that antibiotics have no impact on viruses, and an about 32 per cent of people believed they should stop taking antibiotics when they feel better, rather than completing the



prescribed course of treatment. Further, the survey revealed that nearly 76 per cent respondents thought that antibiotic resistance happens when the body becomes resistant to antibiotics. [UN News Centre](#)

## Wood-based fuels threaten health of refugees

17 November - The "huge dependency" of refugees on wood- and charcoal-based fuels has horrific consequences for their health, a report has warned. The authors calculated cooking with wood caused 20,000 premature deaths among displaced people each year. The use of alternatives, such as improved cookstoves and solar lamps, could save money and lives, they added. The findings, produced by UK think-tank Chatham House, were published as part of the Moving Energy Initiative. The initiative is an international consortium of organisations looking for sustainable - secure, safe and affordable - ways to meet the energy needs of the estimate 60 million people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes. [BBC News](#)

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## INFLUENZA

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### AFHSC: DoD Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Summary

For Week 44:

NORTHCOM: Influenza activity was minimal to low.

EUCOM: There was minimal influenza activity.

PACOM: Influenza activity was minimal.

CENTCOM and AFRICOM: Both show minimal influenza activity.

SOUTHCOM: Influenza activity remains minimal.

[Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center](#)

### APHC: U.S. Army Influenza Activity Report

For the week ending 7 November 2015 (Week 44):

There was a slight increase in lab specimens that tested positive for influenza A specimens (0.6% versus 0.4% in week 43). Influenza vaccination coverage has also increased across Army service components since week 43.

- ILI Activity: Army incident ILI outpatient visits in week 44 were 9% higher than the same week last year.
- Influenza cases: No hospitalized influenza cases were reported to APHC(P) through DRSi in week 44. Two cases have been reported to date this influenza season.
- Viral specimens: During week 44, 75 of 754 (10%) laboratory specimens tested positive for respiratory pathogens. RHC-A reported the most influenza A-positive specimens (75%), followed by RHC-C (25%). The other regions did not report any positive influenza A specimens. [Army Public Health Center](#)

## CDC: Flu View - Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report

During week 44 (November 1-7, 2015), influenza activity was low in the United States.

- Viral Surveillance: The most frequently identified influenza virus type reported by public health laboratories in week 44 was influenza A viruses, with influenza A (H3) viruses predominating. The percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza in clinical laboratories is low.
- Pneumonia and Influenza Mortality: The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below their system-specific epidemic threshold in both the NCHS Mortality Surveillance System and the 122 Cities Mortality Reporting System. [CDC](#)

## ECDC: Flu News Europe

Week 45/2015 (2 November - 8 November)

- Influenza activity across the WHO European Region was at low levels in most of the 42 countries that reported data for week 45/2015.
- In line with this low activity, influenza viruses were detected in 45 patients only: seven from sentinel influenza-like illness (ILI) sources, 36 from non-sentinel sources and two laboratory-confirmed influenza cases in hospitalized patients.
- Representatives of all seasonal influenza viruses (A(H1N1)pdm09, A(H3N2) and B) were detected.

Season

- As usual for this time of year, influenza activity in the European Region is low, with few influenza viruses detected.
- No indication of increased mortality due to influenza has been reported through the European monitoring of excess mortality for public health action project.

[European Center for Disease Prevention and Control/WHO](#)

## NHRC: Febrile Respiratory Illness Surveillance Update

For 2015 Week 45 (through 14 November 2015):

- Influenza: No new cases of NHRC laboratory-confirmed influenza among US military basic trainees.
- Recent clusters of *M. pneumoniae* cases at several training centers.
- FRI surveillance at all eight U.S. military basic training centers indicated FRI rates were elevated at Fort Benning. [Naval Health Research Center](#)

## Study: 4-strain nasal-spray flu vaccine 82% effective against 1 'B' strain

18 November - Quadrivalent (four-strain) live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV, which is administered via nasal spray) showed 82% protection against flu B/Yamagata strains in



children but none against 2009 H1N1 in the 2013-14 flu season, while cases of H3N2 and B/Victoria flu were too few for determining effectiveness for those strains, according to a Nov 14 study in *Vaccine*. ... The study also found that inactivated flu vaccine—the flu shot—was 70% effective against the Yamagata strains and 74% effective against 2009 H1N1. [CIDRAP Flu Scan](#) (second item)

## Uber is offering one-day, on-demand vaccinations to your doorstep

17 November - Haven't gotten your flu shot yet? On Thursday, you can order one up using Uber. Customers who normally use the Uber smartphone app to call for a ride will be able to request a flu shot -- and a nurse in an Uber car will show up at their home or office in about three dozen cities across the country. The charge is \$10, but the nurse can give up to 10 flu shots at each location for no additional charge. So work colleagues can split the cost among themselves. But it's only a one-day offer. ... Last year, the company provided flu shots for a day in Boston, New York, Washington and Chicago. The effort was so successful -- with more than 2,000 vaccinations -- that Uber and its partners decided to scale up this winter. [The Washington Post](#)

## USAFSAM: DoD Global, Laboratory-Based, Influenza Surveillance Program

During 1 - 14 November 2015 (Surveillance Weeks 44 & 45), a total of 156 specimens were collected and received from 42 locations. Results were finalized for 92 specimens from 38 locations. One influenza A(H3N2) was identified in Week 44 and Week 45 each. [US Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine](#)

## WHO: Influenza Update

16 November - Globally, influenza activity generally remained low in both hemispheres.

- In the Northern Hemisphere, influenza activity continued at low, inter-seasonal levels with sporadic detections.
- Few influenza virus detections were reported by countries in Africa.
- In tropical countries of the Americas, Central America and the Caribbean, influenza activity remained at low levels, with the exception of Cuba, where high numbers of severe acute respiratory infections (SARI), associated with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus and RSV, continued to be reported. In Colombia, acute respiratory activity (ARI) again remained slightly elevated with ongoing RSV and influenza A(H3N2) detections.
- In western Asia, Bahrain and Qatar reported increased influenza activity, predominantly due to influenza A (H1N1)pdm09.
- In tropical Asia, countries in Southern and South East Asia reported low influenza activity overall except India, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand where activity mainly due to A(H1N1)pdm09 virus continued to be reported. Influenza activity declined in southern China. Iran reported increased influenza detections, mostly due to

influenza A(H3N2).

- In temperate South America, respiratory virus activity continued to decrease in recent weeks. In Chile, ILI activity decreased but remained above expected levels in recent weeks with decreased detections of influenza viruses and RSV.
- In Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, influenza activity continued to decrease to low levels of virus detections with the end of the influenza season in these countries.

[WHO](#)

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## **VETERINARY/FOOD SAFETY**

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### **Genetically modified salmon cleared for human consumption**

19 November - Federal regulators cleared the way for a genetically engineered salmon to be farmed for human consumption in the first-ever such approval for an animal whose DNA has been scientifically modified. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval of the salmon, developed by AquaBounty Technologies to grow faster than conventional, farmed salmon, followed years of deliberations. The regulator has now declared that the salmon is as nutritious as normally grown Atlantic salmon, which means the salmon will not require special labeling. [Reuters](#)

### **Nexvet canine osteoarthritis drug meets main goal in study**

16 November - Shares of Nexvet Biopharma Plc rose as much as 33 percent after the animal-health company's drug for canine osteoarthritis showed promise in a study. Dogs enrolled in the study experienced relief from pain at four weeks when compared with placebo, the company said, adding that the results would form the basis for a regulatory application with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. [Reuters](#)

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## **WELLNESS**

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### **Alcoholism drug can 'wake up' dormant HIV to be killed, study finds**

18 November - Scientists seeking a cure for the AIDS virus have made an unexpected discovery with a drug designed to combat alcoholism which they say could be a critical part

of a strategy to "wake up" and then kill dormant HIV hiding in the body. The drug, branded as Antabuse but also sold as a generic called disulfiram, was given to 30 HIV positive patients in America and Australia who were already taking antiretrovirals (ART) AIDS drugs. At the highest given dose, there was evidence that "dormant HIV was activated", the researchers said in a study published in The Lancet HIV journal on Monday, and with no adverse effects. [Reuters](#)

## Brawn and brains

18 November - ... [For] the new study, which was published this month in Gerontology, Dr. Steves and her colleagues turned to ... twins who, 10 years previously, had completed extensive computerized examinations of their memory and thinking abilities, as well as assessments of their metabolic health and leg-muscle power, which measure muscles' force and speed. ... Then the researchers compared leg power 10 years earlier with changes in brain function over the same time period. They found that of the 324 twins, those who had had the sturdiest legs a decade ago showed the least fall-off in thinking skills, even when the scientists controlled for such factors as fatty diets, high blood pressure and shaky blood-sugar control. ... The differences in thinking skills were particularly striking within twin pairs. If one twin had been more powerful than the other 10 years before, she tended to be a much better thinker now. [The New York Times](#)

## Drink to your health: Study links daily coffee habit to longevity



17 November - ... A new study finds those cups of joe may help boost longevity. "In our study, we found people who drank three to five cups of coffee per day had about a 15 percent lower [risk of premature] mortality compared to people who didn't drink coffee," says one of the study authors, nutrition researcher Walter Willett of the Harvard School of Public Health. Decaf drinkers also saw benefits.

The findings ... build on a body of evidence linking a coffee habit to potential health benefits. As we've reported, previous research has pointed to a decreased risk of stroke. And, there's some evidence that a coffee habit cuts the risk of Type 2 diabetes, too. [NPR](#)

## Five ways your smartphone can help your health

16 November - ... Here are five healthful tricks your phone can do.

- Medical ID: ... Setting up your phone's medical ID allows doctors or emergency workers to ... access medical conditions, allergies, emergency contacts, blood type and other potentially lifesaving information.
- Fitness Tracking: Most smartphones now come equipped with motion sensors that measure steps, distance traveled and even stairs climbed.
- Heart Rate Monitors: Samsung's S Health app also has a place to measure your heart rate.
- Track Your Family: Some might call it spying, but I like to think of it more as making

sure everyone is safely where they should be. Find My iPhone automatically comes on any iPhone model running iOS 9.

- Voice-Activated 911: ... No matter what smartphone brand you favor, there's now a way to get most new mobile devices to call 911 for help just by yelling at the device — but you have to set up voice activation first. [The New York Times](#)

## Johns Hopkins report says to focus on opioid prescribers and dispensers

16 November - Stricter guidelines for prescribing and dispensing powerful pain medications are needed to curb the nation's deadly opioid epidemic, according to a report released Monday from public-health leaders at Johns Hopkins University. The analysis offered broad recommendations for addressing opioid abuse, but it stood out for its focus on the supply chain, including physicians and pharmacists. It called for greater monitoring, training and rule-making to prevent misuse of opioids, addiction and overdoses, and said that doctors often prescribe pain medications "in quantities and for conditions that are excessive, and in many cases, beyond the evidence base." [The Washington Post](#)

## Tai chi vs. psychotherapy for better sleep and more

18 November - A new study has shown that cognitive behavioral therapy and tai chi, the Chinese exercise technique, may reduce both insomnia and inflammation. Researchers studied 123 people with insomnia who were over age 55. They were randomized to one of three groups. The first received two hours a week of cognitive behavioral therapy over four months, the second the same amount of tai chi practice, and the third, a control group, a four-month educational program about sleep hygiene, aging and insomnia. ... At one year after the treatment, compared with the control group, those on cognitive behavioral therapy and tai chi had reduced blood levels of C-reactive protein and reduced production of pro-inflammatory cytokines, both indicators of inflammation.

[The New York Times](#)

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### USAFRICOM

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## Ethiopia: How bad is the drought in Ethiopia?

19 November - Alarm bells are ringing for a food emergency in Ethiopia. The UN says 15 million people will need help over the coming months. The government, wary of stigma and therefore hesitant to ask for help, has nevertheless said more than eight million Ethiopians need food assistance. ... Reports suggest this is the worst drought in 30 years. [IRIN](#)

## Guinea's last Ebola patient released from care in Conakry

17 November - The last known Ebola patient in Guinea has recovered and been released from a treatment centre in the capital, Conakry, health officials say. A spokesman for Guinea's Ebola co-ordination unit said two tests on the patient - a baby - had been negative. Guinea will be declared officially free of Ebola if no new cases are reported in the next six weeks. The epidemic, which began in Guinea, has killed more than 11,000 people in West Africa. Neighbouring Sierra Leone and Liberia have already been declared Ebola-free.

[BBC News](#)

## 'Staggering' rates of child abuse in east, southern Africa

17 November - A new report finds that children across East and Southern Africa suffer huge amounts of abuse. Researchers say they have found a "staggering incidence" of violence against children in East and Southern Africa. ... The new study, released Tuesday, found that two in five girls under 18 have endured sexual abuse and that more than seven in 10 children have reported severe beatings at home or school. In Tanzania, for example, kids said those beatings included being kicked or punched. ... [Possible] causes include social stresses, pervasive violence in society, instability, and poverty and that the solution is equally complex. [VOA](#)

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### USCENTCOM

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## Pakistan: Progress toward poliomyelitis eradication — January 2014–September 2015

20 November - Pakistan and Afghanistan remain the only two countries where WPV transmission has never been interrupted. This report describes actions taken and progress achieved toward polio eradication in Pakistan during January 2014–September 2015 and updates previous reports. A total of 38 WPV1 cases were reported in Pakistan during January–September 2015,\* compared with 243 during the same period in 2014 (an 84% decline). Among WPV1 cases reported in 2015, 32 (84%) occurred in children aged <36 months, nine (32%) of whom had never received oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV). Twenty-six (68%) of the 38 reported cases occurred in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Province.

[Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#)

## Saudi Arabia: MERS update sheds light on Saudi hospital cases

13 November - The World Health Organization (WHO) today reported new details about seven recent MERS-CoV cases from Saudi Arabia, six of which had healthcare links.

Healthcare exposure seems to be playing a key role in fueling MERS-CoV (Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus) outbreaks. The cases in today's WHO update were reported by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health (MOH) between Oct 26 and Nov 1. Since then the country's MOH has announced three additional cases, though no new illnesses were reported today. Of the six healthcare-linked MERS cases detailed in today's WHO report, five were in Hofuf, a city in eastern Saudi Arabia that has been the site of a recent hospital outbreak. The sixth involves a healthcare worker in Riyadh, where a large hospital outbreak has been under way since late July, though reported cases have tapered off considerable. ... The 7 cases lift the number of MERS reports the WHO has received to 1,618 cases, most of them from Saudi Arabia. The latest deaths lift the global fatality count to at least 579.

[CIDRAP](#)

## Syria: Syrian attacks on Aleppo devastate health care system

18 November - Syrian government attacks on hospitals in Aleppo have devastated the frontline city's health care, with roughly 95 percent of doctors having fled, been detained or killed, Physicians for Human Rights said Wednesday. "The Syrian government's ongoing assault on health care is one of the most egregious the world has ever seen," the group's report says. It says it documented the deaths of 687 medical personnel and 329 attacks on medical facilities from the beginning of the conflict through October 2015. Less than a third of city's hospitals are functioning as a result of 45 attacks in the past three years, according to the report. [VOA](#)

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## USEUCOM

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## France: As Paris terror attacks unfolded, social media tools offered help in crisis

14 November - As the attacks in Paris were still unfolding on Friday night, social media sites lit up as sources for information that went beyond the news. Facebook activated its Safety Check tool, which allows users in an area affected by a crisis to mark themselves or others as safe. Facebook created the tool to help in times of crisis, a spokeswoman, Anna Richardson White, said on Saturday, and it has activated it five times in the last year after natural disasters. But this was the first time it was activated for something like this, she said. ... Twitter quickly turned into a message board on Friday night with information to help people in Paris get to safety. The hashtag #PorteOuverte — "open door" — became a vehicle for offering shelter to those in Paris who needed it. The hashtag #RechercheParis, Mr. Abboud said, accompanied descriptions of loved ones and requests for information, and it was used to share news when someone who had been sought was found alive.

[The New York Times](#)



## Migrant boat overturns near Greek island, at least nine dead

17 November - At least nine people, including four children, died in the eastern Aegean Sea Tuesday when a plastic boat carrying refugees or economic migrants overturned near the island of Kos, Greek authorities said. The coast guard said it had rescued seven people and had located nine bodies, two of which were still trapped inside the overturned vessel. Crews were searching for between two and four more people listed as missing. The dead were four children, four women and one man. It was not immediately clear how the boat overturned, or what the passengers' nationality was. [Time](#)

## Sweden: Eviction ups risk of suicide

13 November - People who have been evicted from their home are four times more likely than average to commit suicide, according to a large Swedish study. Since many suicides happen when eviction has been ordered but not yet carried out, the authors defined "eviction" as loss of the right to possess one's dwelling, rather than actually leaving it. ... There were 195 suicides [in 2013], including 41 in the eviction group and 154 in the comparison group. Those who had lost their legal right to the dwelling, and where the landlord had applied for the eviction to be executed, were approximately nine times more likely to commit suicide than others. When accounting for other factors like unemployment, substance abuse, mood disorders, education and schizophrenia, suicide was still four times more likely in the eviction group, the researchers reported. [Reuters](#)

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### USNORTHCOM

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## U.S.: 1 in 6 female college freshmen raped while incapacitated

18 November - More than one in every six freshmen women are raped during their first year at college while too drunk or drugged to fend off their attacker, a new U.S. study reports. Even worse, about the same proportion say they entered college having already been raped while incapacitated by drink or drugs, the research revealed. Incoming freshmen with a prior history of "incapacitated rape" are the ones most at risk of another sexual assault during their first year at college, the researchers concluded. Freshmen women also have a higher risk of rape while drunk or drugged if they believe that heavy drinking can enhance a person's sexual experience, said lead researcher Kate Carey. [Medline Plus](#)

## U.S.: Almost 1 in 10 Americans has lifelong drug problem

18 November - Nearly one in 10 Americans has some type of lifelong drug use disorder, a new federal government survey finds. But only a quarter of them get the treatment they need, researchers said. The findings stem from a large U.S. National Institutes of Health survey. It's the first survey based on updated mental health guidelines that set a higher bar for diagnosing drug addiction than previous guidelines. "But the seriousness and persistence of the situation doesn't appear to have changed all that drastically since our last look at this," said study lead author Bridget Grant. "What we see," Grant added, "is that a little over 23 million Americans are directly affected with a lifelong problem. And many more are affected when you consider that the issue involves not just the user but also the user's family and social network. And on top of that we also see that treatment rates are really not that great." [Medline Plus](#)

## U.S.: Declining antibiotic prescriptions in the U.S., 1999–2012

18 November - In a representative U.S. population sample, the proportion with antibiotic use during the preceding 30 days declined from 6.1% in 1999–2002 to 4.1% in 2011–2012. ... Significant decreases were noted for all age groups except 2–5 and ≥60 years, for both sexes (albeit of greater magnitude for males than for females), for non-Hispanic whites and blacks (but not for Mexican-Americans), and for individuals with and without health insurance. Significant declines were seen for penicillins, cephalosporins, and macrolide derivatives. [NEJM Journal Watch](#)

## U.S.: Dengue outbreak in Hawaii expands to 49 cases

16 November - The number of locally acquired cases of mosquito-borne dengue fever on the big island of Hawaii has jumped by 16 in 4 days, to 49, the Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) said in a Nov 14 update. Of the 49 confirmed cases, 39 are in Hawaii residents and 10 are in visitors. Illness-onset dates range from Sep 11 to Nov 7. Six of the 16 new cases are in children, raising that total to 10. The other 39 cases involve adults. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (second item)

## U.S. doctor group calls for ban on drug advertising to consumers

17 November - The American Medical Association on Tuesday called for a ban on advertising prescription drugs and medical devices directly to consumers, saying the ads drive patients to demand expensive treatments over less costly ones that are also effective. The influential doctors' group said the new policy reflects physicians' concerns that marketing spending on a proliferation of advertising is helping to drive up drug prices. ... "Direct-to-consumer advertising also inflates demand for new and more expensive drugs, even when those drugs may not be appropriate," AMA Board Chair-elect Patrice Harris said in a statement. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Early prostate cancer cases fall along with screening

17 November - Fewer men are being screened for prostate cancer, and fewer early-stage cases are being detected, according to two studies published Tuesday in The Journal of the American Medical Association. The number of cases has dropped not because the disease is becoming less common but because there is less effort to find it, the researchers said. The declines in both screening and incidence "could have significant public health implications," the authors of one of the studies wrote, but they added that it was too soon to tell whether the changes would affect death rates from the disease. [The New York Times](#)

## U.S.: F.D.A. approves a nasal spray to combat opioid overdose

18 November - A nasal spray designed to reverse opioid overdoses won approval from the Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday, expanding the options for treating drug overdoses without medical training. Until now, all versions of the overdose reversal drug naloxone were injectable. The spray, called Narcan, will make it easier for ordinary people to treat someone who has taken too much oxycodone, morphine or heroin. Adapt Pharma Inc., the company that makes it, said it would offer the spray at a discount to emergency workers, firefighters and the police. [The New York Times](#)

## U.S. files criminal charges against sellers of Jack3d, other supplements

17 November - USPlabs, which sold the best-selling workout supplement Jack3d, and six of its executives face criminal charges for the unlawful sale of nutritional supplements, the U.S. Justice Department said Tuesday in announcing a larger probe by federal agencies aimed at stemming the sale of unproven products. The indictment says that USPlabs LLC used a synthetic stimulant made in China to make Jack3d and OxyElite Pro but told retailers that the supplements were manufactured from plant extracts. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Medicaid linked with better blood pressure control

17 November - Low-income people with Medicaid health insurance are more knowledgeable about their health status and have better control over some chronic conditions, like high blood pressure, than similar people without Medicaid coverage. ... [Some states] have still not expanded Medicaid, leaving residents with too much income to qualify for Medicaid but too little to afford the state or federal insurance exchange. ... Those [people] with Medicaid were more likely to have at least one doctor's visit per year and were more often aware of and in control of their high blood pressure status. Those with Medicaid were also more aware of being overweight than those without insurance, Christopher and colleagues reported in the American Journal of Public Health. [Reuters](#)

## U.S.: Public health spending down 9.3% since 2008

13 November - Per capita public health spending has dropped 9.3% since 2008, reflecting a \$40.2 billion loss to disease prevention and related programs from 2009 through 2014,

according to an article published in the American Journal of Public Health. ... There is no absolute measure of the optimal level of public health spending, but an Institute of Medicine panel recently concluded that public health agencies are markedly underfunded. [Medical News Today](#)

## U.S.: Syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia rates rising for first time in years – CDC

17 November - The number of cases of three key sexually transmitted diseases increased last year for the first time since 2006, concerned U.S. health officials reported Tuesday. In 2014, 1.4 million cases of chlamydia were reported to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -- a 2.8 percent increase since 2013. This is the highest number of cases of any STD ever reported to the CDC, the government researchers said in the annual report. Substantial increases were also reported in rates of syphilis (15 percent) and gonorrhea (5 percent). And the syphilis rates were highest among gay and bisexual men, according to the CDC's *Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance, 2014* report. ... STDs affect young people and women most severely. However, increasing rates among men represent a large part of the overall increases across all three STDs, Bolan said. ... While STDs are preventable and treatable, Bolan suggested that diminished access to clinics has contributed to the increased epidemic in recent years. [Medline Plus](#)

## U.S.: Texas law leads to more attempts at self-induced abortions: study

17 November - A Texas law aimed at restricting abortions, which took effect in 2013, has led to more women trying to end a pregnancy on their own, while the number of clinical procedures in the state has declined, according to a study released on Tuesday. The study showed that poor women bear the brunt of the law. "Poverty, limited resources, and local facility closures limited women's ability to obtain abortion care in a clinic setting and were key factors in deciding to attempt abortion self-induction," the Texas Policy Evaluation Project found. The study estimated that between 100,000 and 240,000 women aged 18 to 49 in Texas have tried to self-induce abortion since the law went into effect, using such methods as herbs, teas and medications obtained in Mexico without prescription. [Reuters](#)

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### USPACOM

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## Bangladesh's climate change migrants

13 November - ... [Approximately] 350,000 people that the World Bank estimates migrate to Dhaka each year. Most of them come from the delta, where advancing water levels, increasingly frequent storms and the rising salinity of the soil are destroying farmland. ...

With its low-lying and densely populated delta, and its cyclone-battered coast, Bangladesh is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to rising sea levels and increasingly intense and frequent storms. ... "By 2050, it is estimated that one in every seven people in Bangladesh is likely to be displaced by climate change, and they are also likely to move to urban centres already burdened with meeting the needs of a dense population," United Nations resident coordinator Robert Watkins said in a statement in September. [IRIN](#)

## Indonesia reports Zika infection for the first time

15 November - Human infection with the mosquito borne Zika virus (ZIKV) has been reported in areas of Africa, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands and more recently, in Latin America and the Caribbean. Indonesia has not reported a human case of ZIKV until now. In a post on the infectious disease website, ProMed Mail today, the Chairman of the Eijkman Institute for Molecular Biology in Jakarta, Indonesia reported the molecular identification of the virus for the first time. [Outbreak News Today](#)

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### USSOUTHCOM

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## Brazil microcephaly update: 240 cases from multiple states

17 November - In a follow-up to a report on the unusual increases of microcephaly in Pernambuco state, Brazil, several additional states are reporting unexpected increase in the number of newborns with microcephaly, skull malformation that can lead to serious consequences in child development, according to local media (computer translated). Besides Pernambuco, a state which concentrates most of the cases, with over 141 notifications, there are records in Rio Grande do Norte (22), Paraíba (9), Sergipe (49) and Piauí (12), according to Health departments. There are also cases under investigation in Ceará, says the Ministry of Health. In Rio Grande do Norte, Professor of Tropical Medicine Institute of Rio Grande do Norte, Kleber Light said tests so far in babies and mothers did not identify the occurrence of infections that often lead to this kind of malformation: toxoplasmosis, cytomegalovirus, herpes and syphilis. ... About 80% of mothers reported having presented during the first months of pregnancy with spots, rashes and fever – symptoms associated with Zika disease, a mosquito borne virus seen in numerous states in the country. [Outbreak News Today](#)

## Clues emerge in the fight against a mysterious killer of Central American farmers

16 November - During the past two decades mysterious kidney failure has killed more than 20,000 farmers on Central America's Pacific coast. The chronic kidney disease continues to

afflict those in the region, most of whom either worked or still work on sugarcane or cotton plantations and are men between the ages of 20 and 40. ... [This chronic kidney disease of non-traditional causes] has afflicted workers in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama, Honduras and some parts of Mexico. ... [Since] 2004 scientists have started to pay more attention to factors related to the work environment of farmers in those regions. People affected by this disease typically work an average of 12 hours a day outdoors, often in high temperatures. ... "Physical exhaustion and heat can provoke excessive production of uric acid, and if the person cannot get rid of it on time, the acid develops into uric acid crystals that are held temporarily in the kidneys' filters," explains Richard Johnson, a nephrologist at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. "This produces dehydration and [it] is then when renal damage begins." [Scientific American](#)

## PAHO notes 4,000 new chikungunya cases in Americas

16 November - Countries in the Americas and Caribbean reported 4,370 recent cases of chikungunya, bringing the outbreak total to 1,768,106, according to a Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) update from late last week. ... The new infections reported in the Nov 13 update bring the total this year to 621,337 suspected and confirmed cases. PAHO also reported 4 new chikungunya deaths ... bringing this year's fatality total to 76. Colombia accounted for almost all the new cases. ... Mexico was second, with 247 cases and now has 9,642 total cases. [CIDRAP News Scan](#) (first item)

## Suriname: Zika virus infection

13 November - On 12 November 2015, the National IHR Focal Point of Suriname notified PAHO/WHO of 4 additional cases of Zika virus infection. The cases were laboratory confirmed by the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA). ... PAHO/WHO recommends that its Member States establish and maintain the capacity to detect and confirm cases of Zika virus infection, prepare their health services for a potential additional burden at all levels of health care, and implement an effective public communications strategy to reduce the mosquitoes that transmit this disease, particularly in areas where this vector is present. [WHO](#)

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